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TAGA SPORTS

JULY - SEPTEMBER 2016

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Q&A: DOUGLAS SCHMIDT JR.

AMERICAN FOOTBALL IS ALIVE AND KICKING

PIXLEY'S LIFELONG LOVE FOR RUNNING

HOW TO TRAIN A FIREFIGHTER

DCCA-Division of Youth Services Community Service Block Grant Activities

2016 CWA Mini Workshop Sessions
Hosted by; Public Health & Carolinian Affairs Office

2016 Red Cross Walkathon: DYS partnership and community outreach with the Northern Marianas Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence.

The DYS Family & Youth Enhancement Program- Community Services Section provides a variety of programs and services to assist the poor and near poor to reduce and eliminate the causes of poverty through the following programs and services:

COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY: Is an eligible non- profit organization who is sub- granted under the Department of Community & Cultural Affairs Division of Youth Services through a funding under the Community Services Block Grant, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. The CSBG Sub- grant's purpose is to deliver necessary services to the citizens of the Commonwealth with emphases on serving the poor and the near poor population. The program provides and coordinates education and training services and employment referrals to help low- income families gain education and career skills to move towards self- sufficiency. Through case management, the program also offers guidance and linkages to network individuals and families to other service providers.

Educational Opportunity:

The Community Action Agency (CAA) collaborates with the NMC/Adult Basic Education and/or the Northern Marianas Institute to register and enroll individuals who have yet to obtain a high school diploma or who would like to acquire a certificate of completion with a particular vocational trade.

Skills/Employment Training:

The CAA also provides and coordinates training opportunities for individuals to gain and improve their work readiness skills and conducts referrals to the Department of Labor/Workforce Investment Agency for employment.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM: The purpose of the volunteer program is to provide assistance to the Division of Youth Services through volunteer services which will help accomplish the goals and objectives set forth by the division. The utilization of volunteers provides a cost- effective means of supporting programs and services as it builds its capacity to serve both the agency and volunteer needs. It provides for additional youth and adult training opportunities as knowledge and skills are built through service delivery.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH: The DYS coordinates community outreach events with other government or non- profit organizations to bring about prevention awareness on health and safety issues, violence and other obstacles affecting the vulnerable populations.

SPONSORSHIPS: Sponsors community organizations to help youth and the community build self- esteem, gain leadership skills, teamwork and overall provide for empowerment opportunities.

PARTNERSHIPS: DYS maintains its partnership with governmental and other non- profit organizations for coordinated services to children, youth and families to meet DYS' goals and objectives.

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2015 Summer Youth Empowerment Camp Youth Volunteers with camp participants

DIVISION OF YOUTH SERVICES

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Remember when your parents would tell you to stop playing so you can have time to study for your class tomorrow?

It's the exact opposite for student-athletes who want to pursue higher education through scholarships, as they now have to play sports to obtain a scholarship and get a partial or even a full ride through college.

In the CNMI, a few have made a successful transition to sports wunderkind to college athlete. In this issue's cover story, Roselyn B. Monroyo tackles the path this rare breed of student-athletes took to take their homegrown skills in baseball, basketball, tennis, soccer, etc. into another level by getting an athletic scholarship.

While he didn't grew up in the Commonwealth, one basketball talent currently making waves on the islands' hardcourt scene is Douglas Schmidt Jr. The former Palauan national player shares his secrets in what makes him a special hoopster in a Q&A by Monroyo.

Still in basketball, Jon Perez explains the name change of the CNMI's basketball association into the Mariana Islands Basketball Federation. Another dose of basketball in this issue are Thomas Manglona II's feature on Markel Toves, this year's MVP of the Coalition of Private Schools Sports Association basketball league; and the debut of Djaymarch Ong's basketball diary.

For health, our resident nutrition expert, Kaisa Andersen, discusses about the need for people to scrutinize health materials they read and not to always accept them as bible truth. Professional trainer Dre Delos Santos, for his part, explains why we always seem to fall short in attaining our workout goals.

The CNMI Sharks is also in this issue with Manglona writing about the CNMI American football team's recent revival and how it has thrived in its second go-around.

And speaking of thriving, Ferdie de la Torre interviewed Saipan lawyer Steven Pixley and asked him about his staying power in competitive running. As a parting shot, Jim Rayphand wrote a feature on the arduous physical and mental test fire cadets have to go through to become full-fledged firefighters.

MARK RABAGO
Associate Editor

COVER ART

Soccer's Kennedy Izuka and tennis' Mikayla Lopez can't wait to strut their stuff in college.

Photography by
ROSELYN B. MONROYO

TAGA SPORTS

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WRITERS'BLOC

KAISA ANDERSON

Kaisa is a registered dietitian. She is not a fan of running, but somehow got coerced by a friend into running a half marathon this summer. Luckily chocolate milk can be a great recovery snack from long runs and she is obsessed with the drink, so that works out well.

THOMAS MANGLONA II

Thomas is a Mount Carmel School senior, writes for the *Saipan Tribune* and *North Star*, and reports for the Pacific News Center. The 17-year-old has a burning passion for journalism, enjoys meeting new people, going to new places, and capturing important community moments. He is set to study journalism at U.C. Berkeley this fall.

ROSELYN MONROYO

After passing up on a chance to play collegiate ball in her sophomore year, Roselyn ended up writing basketball stories for her school organ, The Sentinel.

JON PEREZ

Jon retired immediately from playing basketball soon after scoring 4 points, grabbing 3 rebounds, issuing 5 assists, and having a steal in a tournament in Manila, Philippines way back in the early '90s. He was forced to unretire in an inter-company league last year only to hang up his sneakers again after a few games. He has no plans of coming back to the sport and is happy working at the sidelines as an armchair analyst and would-be basketball expert.

JIM RAYPHAND

Jim recently earned his certification to be a firefighter (Type II Hand-Crew) through the National Wildfire Coordinating Group for the Pacific Southwest Region. He has high hopes of being deployed with CNMI's team should it get called up to assist in national efforts to contain wild land forest fires this summer though he worries the extra (or rather excess) pounds he carries around may lessen his chances.

DRE DELOS SANTOS

Dre earned his Bachelor's of Science in Kinesiology at the University of Hawaii, and now runs his fitness business as a certified strength coach in Honolulu, Hawaii. He is an alumnus of Mt. Carmel High School.

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Ferdie, a veteran journalist who has covered all news beats in the CNMI, loves to play and watch basketball games. Ferdie used to be a runner/sprinter during his elementary school days and proudly represented his alma mater, Yati Elementary School, in Lilo-an, Cebu, Philippines during the town's inter-school athletic competition running relay race.

DJAYMARCH ONG

One can honestly say that Djaymarch grew up in a basketball court. His family's former apartment in Lower Navy Hill literally was just a stone's throw away from a makeshift basketball ring located right smack along the road. Djaymarch is an incoming senior at Saipan Southern High School.

Email letters to the editor to editor@saipantribune.com or mail to PMB 34, P.O. Box 10001, Saipan MP 96950. Submissions to TAGA Sports must include the writer's name, village address (no P.O. boxes), and daytime phone or mobile number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity and may be published or used in any medium. All submissions become the property of the publication and will not be returned.

Finding the good stuff

4 tips on finding the most reliable nutrition information

When I do research to stay current on new nutrition information, it seems resources are getting more and more conflicting. The saying used to be, "Don't believe everything you see on TV." This same principle goes into what you read and see on the Internet nowadays. The media sensationalizes new nutritional studies, and in addition the fitness industry is pushing their new products and nutrition programs. This is misleading and cannot be considered reliable 100 percent of the time. Here are some fail-safe ways to avoid falling down the rabbit hole of incorrect nutrition information found in articles, studies, television, and the Internet.

KAISA ANDERSON RD
Contributing Writer

SEE TIPS ON PAGE 8

TIP#1

The title is not always what the study found

Journalism is all about headlines and titles. I vividly remember when I was younger on a Thanksgiving Day the 5 o'clock news stating, "A new study has found chocolate can actually be good for you, more on that later in the hour." So you bet I watched the whole hour of news, only to find out the antioxidants in dark chocolate were found to have possible cancer fighting effects. At the time, I was a tween, so I knew nothing about reading studies or doing further research. Now as an educated professional, the common knowledge is the possible positive effects of antioxidants on radical agents, which may or may not cause cancer. These antioxidants are found in many foods, including dark chocolate, however you must remember the antioxidants do not negate the effects of chocolate's fat and sugar content, which can lead to adverse health outcomes. This is a perfect example of a misleading health headline or title, which leads the general population into health trends, which may not overall benefit them. If an article captures your attention by the title, read it, but then go and read the actual study they are referencing and look through a critical eye of what the study actually found versus what the news article reported.

TIP#2

Evaluate the writer's credibility

Living in the day of information, anyone can post anything on the Internet, e-book, e-magazine, or blog. Journalism companies assign important news stories to their best writers, and assign smaller topics to those less tenured. This means the nutrition article was assigned by the draw of a hat, not always to someone with expertise or knowledge on the topic. Now I am not saying their article should be cast aside immediately if they are not a licensed health professional or have extensive years in the nutrition field. The article may offer some good information based on the writer's effort to find citable sources (See Tip# 3). However, if your author of the nutrition article is a licensed health professional, it gives the article more credibility based on their expertise and experience. For example, you wouldn't take financial advice from your barber and the same goes for diet and exercise, your best choice is an actual expert such as your doctor or registered dietitian.

TIP#3

Look for nutrition health statements supported by a reliable source

When reading a nutrition article it is important to take time to tell the difference between an opinion statement and a supported fact statement. An opinion statement will purely be someone's point of view on a topic. Compare to a supported fact statement; when it is used, it has referenced a reliable scientific study or reputable institution. Let's compare two sentences to see if you can find the difference. Read the following sentence, "Intermittent fasting is the best way you can lose weight; I have done it for the past year and have lost plenty of weight, you should do it too." In contrast to these sentences, "Among the limited studies of intermittent fasting in humans, a study published in the Nutrition Journal examined the effects of an intermittent fasting, calorie restriction, and liquid dieting in obese women. They found it to be an effective weight loss strategy over an eight-week period when practicing intermittent fasting with a calorie restricted diet in liquid form one day of the week." OK, so I had to use two sentences, but the point is the sentences shares solid evidence of the effects of this new nutritional fad diet versus the first sentence that is pure opinion. A great place to search nutrition topics that focus on the science of nutrition and project it accurately is the International Food Information Council. This organization's sole purpose is to debunk media's sensationalizing of studies and offer information from the food industry in the proper form based on the actual studies findings.

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2016 SPORTS CALENDAR

JULY

32nd Saipan International Fishing Tournament: The race is on for the boat that will catch a marlin weighting over 942lbs as $10,000 awaits the team that will break the record in Saipan Fishermen Association-organized tournament.

Asia Pacific Regional Championships: The CNMI's Major, Senior, and Junior League All-Star teams travel to South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines to play the best in the region and vie for the slots to the World Series.

Pacific Xtreme Combat 54: The CNMI's very own Kelvin "The Big Hit" Fitial and Shane "Pika" Alvarez will see action in this MMA event at the University of Guam Fieldhouse.

AUGUST

Pacific Oceania Junior Championships: Seventeen junior players from the CNMI will head to Fiji to represent the North Pacific Team in the annual tournament against the West and East squads.

Tournament of Champions: The most competitive golf tournament in the CNMI will have local players challenging golfers from Japan, Korea, Guam, and U.S. mainland.

Road to Hell Series 2: The second leg of the pre-Hell of Marianas races will bring bikers along the route of the 100K course, particularly in the Marpi area.

SEPTEMBER

NMIFA Youth Fall League: Local football action will be back on Saipan as the various clubs compete in the final season of the year.

AFC U-16 Women's Championship 2017 Qualifiers: The CNMI will compete in Group B of the qualifiers against South Korea, India, Lebanon, Malaysia, and the Philippines.

COPSSA Volleyball League: Private schools on Saipan battle for middle school and high school volleyball championships.

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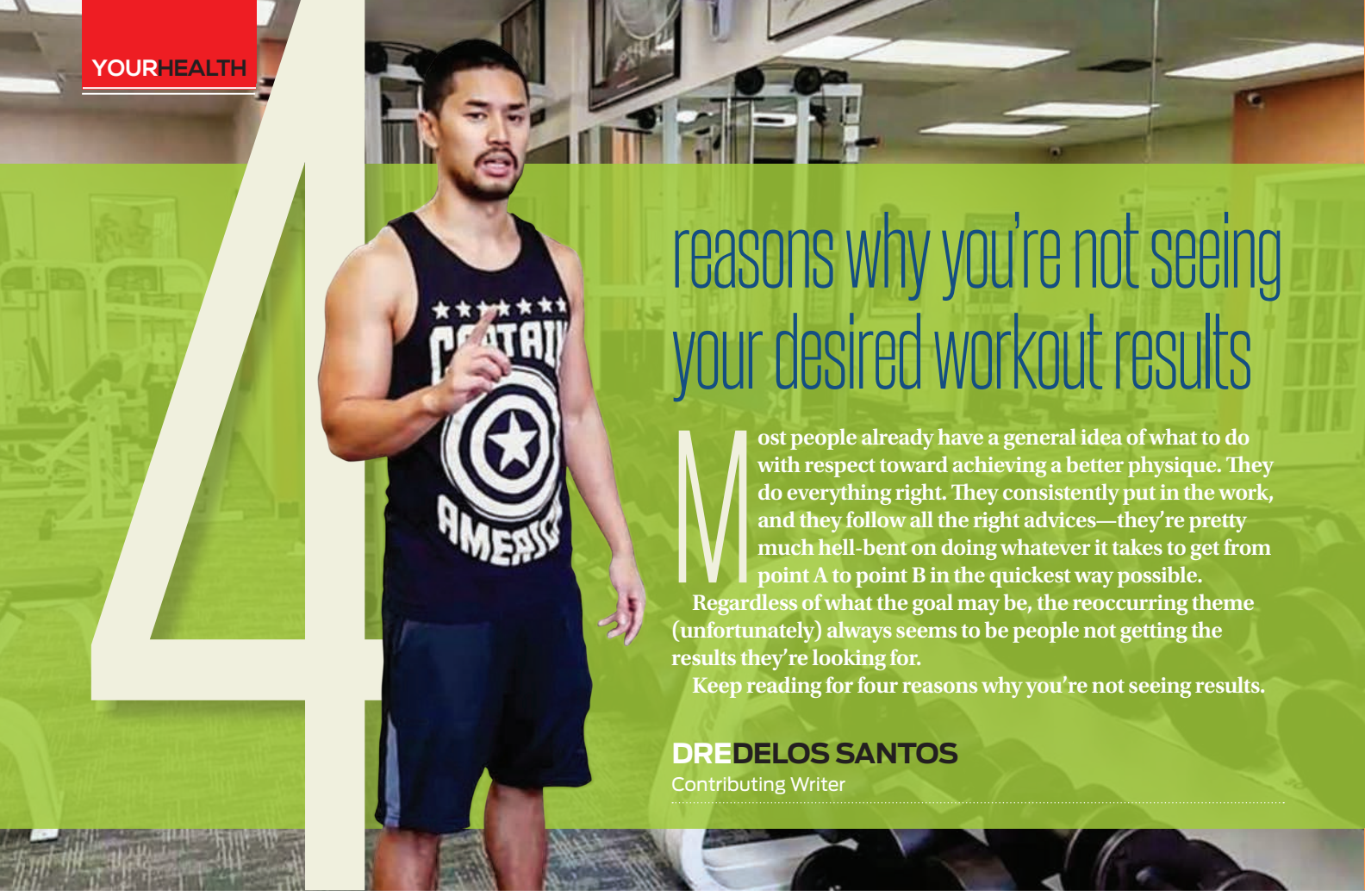

4 reasons why you're not seeing your desired workout results

Most people already have a general idea of what to do with respect toward achieving a better physique. They do everything right. They consistently put in the work, and they follow all the right advices—they're pretty much hell-bent on doing whatever it takes to get from point A to point B in the quickest way possible.

Regardless of what the goal may be, the reoccurring theme (unfortunately) always seems to be people not getting the results they're looking for.

Keep reading for four reasons why you're not seeing results.

DREDELOS SANTOS
Contributing Writer

1 Lack of discipline and work ethic

If there's one thing that working in a commercial gym has taught me, it's that most folks go through the motions. The effectiveness of a training program pales in comparison to your ability to consistently put in the work.

It's mind-boggling how some people can just sit down and do completely nothing with regards to their health. I'm not insinuating that you lack any semblance of tenacity and intensity. I'm simply conveying that you're not actually working that hard. Show up and put up! Getting out of your comfort zone is necessary if you ultimately want to look better naked. Taking selfies in the gym and posting your workout on social media does not equate to productivity in the gym—you're just a douche.

2 You don't even lift

Following up with the point above—nothing beats hard work. What's most unfortunate is people falling prey to fads and gimmicks promising fast results. There's a reason why compound movements such as squats, deadlifts, pull-ups, presses, and rows are staples in so many strength-training programs. Simple isn't sexy, but it gets the job done.

Prioritizing compound movements are going to give you a more impressive physique than you'd get from curls and sit-ups. If you think for one second that you'd be better off without them, you're completely delusional. Get bigger, stronger, faster, and leaner by sticking to the big lifts before you think about doing an arm and abs day.

3 No sense of purpose

While I do think far too many people place too much of an emphasis on advanced training protocols, we have to appreciate just how beneficial actually having a plan can help. As the old adage goes, "Failure to prepare is preparing to fail." You'd be wise to take that into consideration because at the end of the day, you have to train with a purpose. You'd be hard-pressed to find anybody with a good-looking physique that doesn't track their progress. Establish a plan and get after it.

4 Overlooking the importance of hydration and sleep

Let's face it, the vast majority of the population are chronically dehydrated and are sleep deprived. In fact, in addition to how negatively it impacts performance, studies have shown that dehydration and sleep deprivation lead to an increase in fat mass. You can follow any training program to a T, but if you're not doing the simple things such as drinking more water and getting enough sleep, you're just spinning your wheels.

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TIP#4

Confirm no conflict of interest between advertisements and the writer's article

The money made for the Internet is paid by advertisements. Social media, bloggers, and private health business websites all have the opportunity to get paid by posting advertisements before entrance into the website, along the side of the screen, or at the bottom of an article or health video. When reading a nutrition article, look at the advertisements and see if they are related to your health topic you are searching. They may even be advertisements for other health-related Internet searches, because your web history tells the Internet everything about you. When you realize the advertisements and the nutrition article are related because of a product or company, it is a good indication the writer is receiving money for space to advertise, promote, and sell their product, the less credibility it has. Doctors and registered dietitians have also been subject to participating in receiving funds for brand or product promotion, so be cautious. I know some health professionals truly believe in what they are selling, however, they are now a biased source of information at this point and are now selling on opinion and not fact. As an example, about a year ago the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics nearly endorsed Kraft Cheese Singles through a "Kids Eat Right" logo that was to be placed on the product. Through petition of the Academy members, the organization decided to repeal their participation with the "Kids Eat Right" logo on the cheese product. This made many registered dietitians and the public angry as they found it questioning the organization's credibility and motives. The lesson to take away is to be conscious of the motives of your writer, as they may only be looking to make money promoting a supplement or fad diet.

I do not want to take away your reading pleasure of all nutrition articles. I myself, like to read many posted articles from various sources and websites written by people from all walks of life. These articles make me curious and think, and research further into the topics to find the truth. I am not saying to stop reading most nutrition articles altogether, I am only encouraging you to find the ones worthwhile to base your decision on daily nutrition habits. Do not be afraid to search for published studies in reputable science journals, talk to real health experts (not enthusiasts), to make informed safe decisions. There is so much information out there, so save yourself the time and choose to read quality information over reading the quantity of information on a topic. Happy, healthy reading!

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Meet this year's COPSSA MVP: MARKEL TOVES

Amid cheers from the audience, Mt. Carmel School senior Markel Toves was hailed as this year's most valuable player in the Coalition of Private School Sports Association Basketball League. As the team captain of the private school basketball team, Toves led the Knights to victory as they claimed the championship this year.

For the 18-year-old, sports has always been a lifestyle. "I fell in love with just being involved in activities ever since I was kid. I grew up playing baseball with my dad and family but sought for a more particular sport that was my type of challenge and preferred interest, which became basketball," he said.

Toves began playing basketball as a member of the Rollers Basketball Club program. He went on to earn a spot on the Marianas High School junior varsity team. After transferring to Mt. Carmel School, he played on the varsity team there. In his senior year, he managed to suit for both MCS and Rollers Basketball Club teams.

SEE TOVES **ON PAGE 11**

THOMAS MANGLONA II
Contributing Writer

Mount Carmel School

Mount Carmel School understands that an education is more than just academic, which is why we develop well-rounded students who grow academically, physically, socially, morally, and spiritually. This holistic approach helps our students succeed in many ways.

While at Mount Carmel School, our Knights succeed in numerous co-curricular activities, including Academic Challenge Bowl, Attorney General's Cup, Math Court, Mock Trial, National Speech & Debate Association, and athletic competitions such as softball, basketball, and volleyball. Our students also enjoy a wide array of extra-curricular activities like drama, Junior Statesmen of America, National Honor Society, and Red Cross.

These achievements continue long after graduation as our AlumKnights have distinguished themselves as elected officials, doctors, attorneys, teachers, professors, and business executives. Our AlumKnights have also gained admission into prestigious universities like Georgetown University, Le Cordon Bleu Culinary School, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), New York University, Purdue University, the University of California at Berkley, the University of Notre Dame, the University of Michigan, the University of Washington, as well as military academies such as the Coast Guard Academy, the Naval Academy, and the US Military Academy at West Point.

With these accomplishments, our Knights and our AlumKnights are continuing the school's 60 year legacy of Faith, Excellence, and Success.

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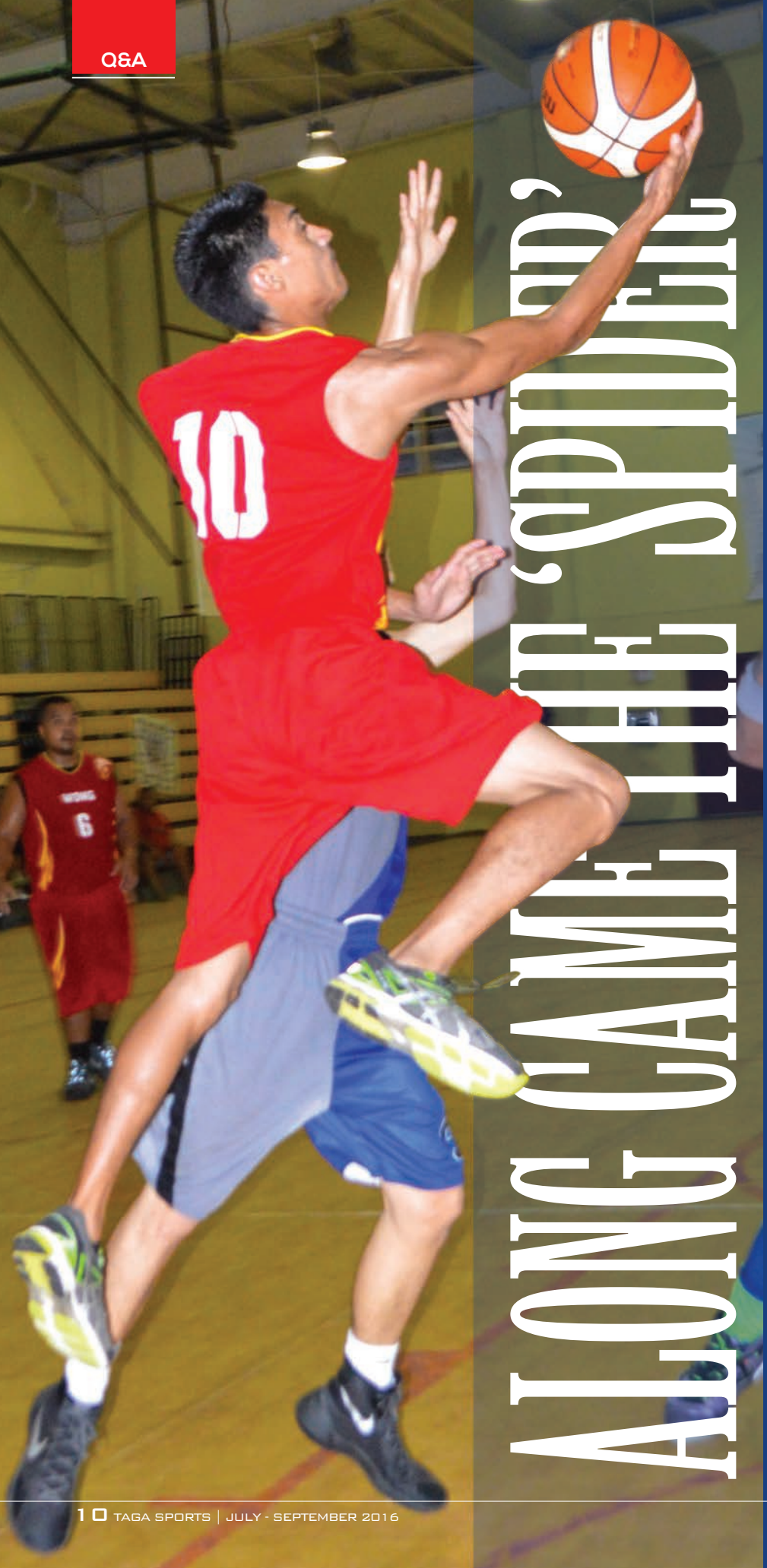


ALONG CAME THE 'SPIDER'

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

In one of the leagues on Saipan, basketball spectators' heads turned after they saw a skinny player blew past his defenders from the backcourt and went for a daredevil drive against the opposing team's last line of defense. He went on to score 40-plus points in that game, wowing the crowd with more acrobatic shots and coast-to-coast drives.

"Who's that?" one of the sport's aficionados asked after another highlight play.

"A new player on Saipan and he's from Palau," another regular spectator answered.

The two were talking about Douglas Schmidt Jr., who just moved to the island early this year, but has been the talk of the town because of his impressive games in the various leagues on the island. He led majority of the statistics (rebounds, steals, assists, and scoring) in the Mariana Islands Basketball Federation's island-wide men's league while playing for the Ol'Aces and won several individual awards in different leagues.

For those asking for more information about a player most of the teams on Saipan would like to recruit for their side, check on TAGA *Sports*' interview with Douglas a.k.a. "Spider."

When did you arrive on Saipan?

I came here on Feb. 1, 2016. I wanted to relocate because I have plenty of family members on Saipan.

Did you play ball back in Palau? How did you come to play basketball on Saipan?

I was into athletics, volleyball, and basketball. I made the Palau national track team in 2006 all the way to 2012, running long distance. I also made it to the basketball national team in 2012 and 2014. Nobody encouraged me to play on Saipan. I just started playing pickup games in village basketball courts and people started recruiting me to play in the leagues.

How would you compare Palau's brand of basketball to Saipan's?

In Palau, the games are a little faster. Here, there are a lot of big players so it is a little challenging and I really have to think outside the box when I play. Also there are a lot of leagues going on at once so it's pretty cool.

Your most memorable game in Palau?

In my first basketball league, I played for Peched and we went to the championship against Rivals in a best-of-five series. We were down in the series, 0-2, and I led our team to

win Games 3, 4, and 5 to become champs…I was the MVP of that tournament.

One of the game's announcers gave you a nickname "Spider." Why do you think he called you that?

I think he gave me that name because I move like a spider on the court and when you're not careful your ball gets stuck on my web and I steal your ball...LOL I'm just guessing ...I don't mind it and I don't really mind what name people give me…I just play my game…

Name the players who give you a hard time in Saipan leagues and who are the best shooters and defenders on island?

I don't underestimate any player. But sometimes there are players that give me a hard time, like the Duenas boys (Matt and Ernest), also Dan Barcinas, Preston Basa, and Elmer Esdrelon. They all have their own unique game style on the court. I believe Jack Lizama is one of the best shooters on Saipan because when the game is close and the pressure is on, you can count on Jack to score (Lizama nailed a triple that helped MJD Enterprise force overtime in their semis game against T Galleria in the government business caging). The best defenders other than me are Dan Barcinas, Ernest and Matt Duenas, and Marvin Rabauliman from Fire.

In which category are you really good at?

I think I do better in rebounding as people underestimate me because I'm a small player... It really depends on which team I play with, that will show what my strong suit is…

Your favorite NBA team and player?

I go for the Black Mamba, Kobe Bryant, because he was going through a lot of problems—hates and doubts—but in the end he proved that he was one of the best players of the game of basketball. My favorite team is the Spurs because they show you how to work as a team and how to be role models and disciplined players. They never underestimate other teams.

A regional tournament is coming up late this year? Are you going to play for the CNMI?

Yes, because my skills and knowledge in basketball would be a big help to the national team and I like the challenge.

The student athlete draws inspiration from his two coaches, Francis San Nicolas of Mount Carmel and Joe Diaz of Rollers Basketball Club.

"I learned everything I know about basketball from these two amazing coaches. They believed in my effectiveness on the court and my potential overall as a player. They saw my drive and determination and crafted me into the player I am today," he explained. "These coaches motivate me to work and polish my skills and the knowledge of the game."

Toves, who has asthma, said that his condition sometimes prevented him from reaching his full potential.

"I learned to grow and adapt to my situation to allow myself to be an effective player overall," he added.

He expressed gratitude to his parents Mark Toves and Catherin Attao-Toves and Martha Retan Sablan and Eric Sablan for their support in his endeavors.

Toves also held the responsibility of being his school's student council vice president while playing sports. "I manage my time going to basketball practices in and out of school as well as games and being able to knock down homework in one day," he said.

Although he does not plan to pursue the sport after high school, he told TAGA *Sports* that he hopes to be like his coaches in the future and return to the island to inspire and train more student athletes. Toves plans to study at a U.S mainland college or university after his graduation this past June.

HPV CANCER PREVENTION

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI). HPV is so common that nearly all sexually active men and women get it at some point in their lives. There are many different types of HPV. Some types can cause health problems including genital warts and various types of cancers, including cervical cancer and cancer of the penis, vagina, anus, and throat. But there are vaccines that can stop these health problems from happening.

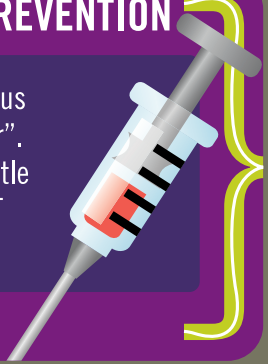
1 HPV VACCINE IS BEST AT 11 YEARS

AT THE SAME TIME AS OTHER TEEN VACCINES

One way to avoid HPV is by getting vaccinated with the HPV vaccine. HPV vaccines have been proven SAFE and EFFECTIVE in protecting males and females against diseases like CANCER when taken in the recommended age groups (beginning at 11 years old).
We start vaccinating children at age 11 to ensure they are protected at a young age before they become adults. Once a person has HPV the vaccine is no longer effective.

2 HPV VACCINE IS CANCER PREVENTION

The HPV vaccine is safe and effective plus it PREVENTS CANCER. It's a "no brainer". Vaccines are like a little miracle in a bottle and the HPV vaccine is no different. IT PREVENTS CANCER. Enough said.



3 HPV VACCINE IS RECOMMENDED

Parents please get your children vaccinated and give them the protection they deserve. Growing up is hard enough. Getting protected against crippling and deadly vaccine preventable diseases is one way we can ensure our children grow up to have a healthy and productive future.

TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT VACCINATING YOUR SONS & DAUGHTERS AGAINST HPV.

IF THERE WERE A VACCINE AGAINST CANCER, WOULDN'T YOU GET IT FOR YOUR KIDS?

CDC
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

Contact the Immunization Program at the Division of Public Health:
Saipan: 236-8745 | Tinian: 433-9233 | Rota: 532-9457
Other Tel. Nos.: 236-8745/8780/81/83
For more information, visit www.cdc.gov.vaccines

VACCINES SAVE LIVES. VACCINES ARE SAFE AND EFFECTIVE. VACCINES SAVE TIME AND MONEY. VACCINES PROTECT US BY BUILDING IMMUNITY TO VACCINE PREVENTABLE DISEASES.

Finding your way into collegiate play

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

CNMI tennis coach Jeff Race was just paying his girlfriend a visit when he was asked to challenge one of the top players at Chapman University. He beat the guy and that earned him a slot on the team. ➜

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Jeff Race, center, poses with the CNMI Women's Tennis Team that won the gold medal in the 2010 Micronesian Games in Palau. From left, Mayuko Arriola, Jodel Fernandez, Lydia Tan, and Kana Aikawa.

ESTIMATED PROBABILITY OF COMPETING IN NCAA ATHLETICS BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL

Student-Athletes	All Sports	Men's Basketball	Women's Basketball	Football	Baseball	Men's Hockey	Men's Soccer
High School Student-Athletes	7,400,000	538,700	433,100	1,100,000	474,800	36,200	411,000
NCAA Student-Athletes	460,000	18,000	16,200	70,100	32,500	4,000	23,400
Percentage Moving from High School to NCAA	6%	3%	4%	6%	7%	11%	6%
Percentage Moving from NCAA to Professional	2%	1%	1%	2%	9%	1%	2%

The CNMI's Josh Jones pitches for the University of West Alabama in the NCAA Division II.

LIST OF RECRUITMENT SITES

Collegiate Sports of America (www.csaprepstar.com). One of the first college recruiting consultants in the U.S., Europe and Africa. Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers was a client and was recruited by University of California, Berkeley.

National Collegiate Scouting Association (www.ncsasports.org). Services include an athletic evaluation by scouts and personal consultations with former athletes and coaches. Founder Chris Krause played football for Vanderbilt University.

SportsWorx (www.sportsworxinc.com). Works on a profile, video highlight reel, and in-depth research on athletes. Former Comcast SportsNet general manager Jennifer Bowden is the company president and employs a lot of former coaches and athletes.

TRUpreps.com. This free site enables athletes to showcase themselves, their teams and their schools in a positive way by uploading sports-related photos, videos and information. Contents are viewed by college recruiters, coaches, other athletes, parents and fans.

beRecruited.com. Free for a basic profile and video clips, but you have to pay for featured exposure on site and instant tracking of coaches who have viewed your profile.

Former CNMI Tennis Team member Kana Aikawa returns a shot in one of her tournaments in Hawaii.

The CNMI's Kobee Mendoza, left, who played for Thomas Jefferson High School in Washington, dribbles away from his defenders during one of their games last season.

While Lady Luck smiled at Race, other athletes hoping to play in the collegiate ranks may not be that fortunate so TAGA *Sports* opted to come up with this piece that will give CNMI athletes insights on how to increase their chances of being recruited after finishing high school.

Play, play, and play some more. Take advantage of every opportunity to play, especially in off-island tournaments. In tennis' case, Race said, the more ranking points you get from ITF Juniors tournaments, the more chances you land a team in college.

"Carol Lee is competing in a lot of ITF Juniors events and by this month (July) she may reach the Top 500 ranking in the world. With that level, she is NCAA Division I material and has a strong chance of getting a full scholarship," Race, the many time Pacific Oceania David Cup team captain said.

"The summer ITF Juniors events are great and if you can play tournaments in the mainland, that will get you some credibility," said Kana Aikawa, one of Race's students who played for the University of Hawaii-Hilo.

Be motivated and ready to work harder. You don't need to be at your peak when you start playing in college, but you always have to keep improving.

When Aikawa first came to UH-Hilo's team, she spent a lot of time on the bench and was without a scholarship.

"It was hard to get a scholarship because I don't have an ITF Juniors ranking. I was the only one without a scholarship when I first joined the team but I worked harder than anybody else and kept a positive attitude (which wasn't always easy especially when getting benched), but I think that's what ultimately got me the scholarship. The coach always had us play practice matches against each other and I was able to beat a few of the players on my freshman year so I'm sure that contributed to her decision as well. After one semester, the coach offered me a full scholarship and I kept that until I graduated," the 2010 Micronesian Games gold medalist said.

Aikawa added an athlete should have a good attitude on and off the court.

"It's very important for schools to get well-rounded student athletes that they can trust will represent their school and the state well."

Keep videos of your games. Though recommendations from coaches are good, a proof of how well you play is the best way to convince collegiate teams you belong in their league.

"The earlier you begin recording yourself and contacting coaches, the better chances you have in getting into a college team. It was personally a rush for me since I began recording my games just my senior year (with Thomas Jefferson High School in Auburn, Washington)," said Kobee Mendoza, who will be suiting up for Wenatchee Valley College in the next school year.

"Once you have that, all you really need to do is talk to coaches. Think of it as selling yourself. You have to talk about your strengths and show plenty of character via emails and calls. I first started talking to Wenatchee Valley College coach Brett McGinnis in the middle of my senior season. He was impressed by my first performance and saw great potential in me just from the first half of the season," the former CNMI Junior National Team member said.

Hire a recruitment company. Coming from a small island with a limited contact with coaches and scouts, a recruitment marketer can help you hook up with the right school.

"I signed up Gabrielle with the National Collegiate Scouting Association and now she is in constant communication with a coach from a junior college in California," said Race of his daughter who is hoping to continue playing soccer in a collegiate league.

U.S. COLLEGES AWARDED OVER $3 BILLION IN ATHLETIC SCHOLARSHIPS TO VARSITY ATHLETES DURING 2014:

Division	Number of Schools	Average Athletic Scholarship (1) Men	Women	Financial Assistance to all Undergraduates (2) % receiving	Average $	Total Dollar Value of Financial Assistance Athletic	Other
NCAA I	348	14,270	15,162	75%	12,359	$ 2.2 billion	$ 4.4 billion
NCAA II	303	5,548	6,814	86%	11,004	$ 578 million	$ 1.3 billion
NCAA III	439	-	-	87%	17,592	-	$ 3.4 billion
NAIA	250	6,603	6,964	92%	12,537	$ 389 million	$ 538 million
NJCAA	481	2,069	2,810	74%	4,847	$ 131 million	$ 1.3 billion
Other Divisions	232	226	388	87%	9,296	$ 11 million	$ 206 million
Totals	**2,053**	**5,493**	**6,625**	**84%**	**11,262**	**$ 3.3 billion**	**$ 11.1 billion**

NCAA RECRUTING FACTS

College sports offer student-athletes opportunities to learn, compete and succeed.

More than **460,000** Student-athletes

19,000 Teams

3 Divisions **1** Association

DIVISION I

Division I schools, on average, enroll the most students, manage the largest athletics budgets, offer a wide array of academic programs and provide the most athletics scholarships.

PARTICIPATION

- 173,500 student-athletes
- 346 colleges and universities

ATHLETICS SCHOLARSHIPS

53 percent of all student-athletes receive some levels of athletics aid

ACADEMICS

2012 Graduation Success Rates 81 percent*

OTHER STATS

Average Enrollment: 12, 900
Average Number of Sports: 18
Average Percentage of Student Body Participating in Sports: 6 percent
Division I National Championships: 26
(1 out of every 8.5 student-athletes participates)

DIVISION II

Division II provides growth opportunities through academic achievement, high-level athletics competition and community engagement. Many participants are first-generations college students.

PARTICIPATION

- 109,100 student-athletes
- 300 colleges and universities

ATHLETICS SCHOLARSHIPS

56 percent of all student-athletes receive some level of athletics aid

ACADEMICS

2012 Academic success rate: 71 percent*

OTHER STATS

Average Enrollment: 4,200
Average Number of Sports: 15
Average Percentage of Student Body Participating in sports: 14 percent
Division II National Championships: 25
(1 out of every 7 student-athletes participates)

DIVISION III

The Division III experience provides an integrated environment that focuses on academic success while offering competitive athletics and meaningful non-athletics opportunities.

PARTICIPATION

- 183,500 student-athletes
- 450 colleges and universities

FINANCIAL AID

75 percent of all student-athletes receive some form of academic grant or need-based scholarship; institutional gift aid totals $13,500 on average.

ACADEMICS

2012 Academic success rate: 87 percent*

OTHER STATS

Average Enrollment: 2,600
Average number of sports:18
Average Percentage of Student Body Participating in Sports: 21 percent
Division III national championships: 28
(1 out of every 10 student-athletes participates)

Race said living in a Pacific island like Saipan makes it hard for players and their parents to check on various schools in the U.S., so having a group to represent you and shop for a school/team is cost effective and gives you more choices.

Athletics recruitment companies have website and some offer their services for free. See list of some recruitment marketers (***see Page 16***)

Keep good grades. Always remember you're a student first before an athlete. You may have all the athletics skills in the world, but if you have failing grades, chances are teams, especially those with high GPA requirements, will pass up on you.

"An athlete with a GPA higher than 3.5 will have 10 times more opportunities than any athlete," Mendoza said.

An athlete is allowed to play in NCAA Division 1 and get 99 percent scholarship, and qualify for other divisions if he meets the following requirements:

Complete 16 core courses and receive a minimum GPA of 2.0 in those courses;

Take SAT or ACT and score a minimum of 400 on the SAT (math and reading only) or 37 on the ACT;

Your core course GPA combined with your SAT/ACT score must meet the minimum requirements as laid out by the NCAA Sliding Scale (***see NCAA website for the scale***).

Other schools have their own academic requirements and though they may be below the NCAA standards, still you have do well in your studies to keep playing and competing in the sport you love.

Be realistic. Start from the ground and up. There's nothing wrong with aiming high, however when you're up against a bunch of athletes who already made a name for themselves in high school leagues in the mainland, stepping back and playing in junior/community college level are the way to go.

"Know where you stand in the pool full of other recruits. Be realistic. Literally, less than 5 percent of high school athletes get into a Division I college. So I wouldn't spend too much time talking to high-end programs. In my case, I focused on talking to community colleges, NAIA, and Division II colleges," Mendoza said.

Some CNMI athletes worked their way up from lower level college leagues. Baseball's Josh Jones first suited up for Colby Community College in the National Junior College Athletics Association for two years before moving up to University of West Alabama—a NCAA Division II school.

Tennis' Ji Hoon Heo and Thea Minor went through the same route. Heo spent his first two years with NCAA Division II's Hawaii Pacific University before getting a spot on the team of Morehead State University, which plays in Division I. Minor started out with the New Mexico Military Institute in the NJCAA, but next school year she will don the colors of Henderson State University in NCAA Division II.

"One of our tennis program's goals is to help our players get an opportunity to play in the collegiate ranks so seeing Thea and others still competing after they are done with their junior tennis careers gives us so much pride and encourage those still on island to keep working hard to get the same chance," Race said.

The CNMI Sports Hall of Famer added that having a team to play with, whether you received a scholarship or not, gives a student-athlete a family to count on.

"Most of the our athletes do not have family members when they move to the U.S., so playing any sport and joining any team give them some sort of a support group—a family away from home. A support system is crucial, especially for a student-athlete who comes from a very small island like ours," Race said.

mariana islands basketball federation

JONPEREZ
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

The CNMI's national basketball association renamed itself Mariana Islands Basketball Federation last year after 30 years of using the Basketball Association of the Northern Mariana Islands as its official name.

MIBF secretary general and youth development officer Elias Rangamar said that the name change was a suggestion made by FIBA-Oeania general secretary Steve Smith during one of his visits on Saipan.

"We wanted to start fresh and reorganize the basketball association. He suggested that we change the name and some sort of rebranding. Plus we wanted to have new and younger faces on the board," said Rangamar.

MIBF held several basketball events early this year, including the Francisco M. Diaz Memorial Youth Basketball League, 2016 Annual Settsu-Saipan Friendship Basketball Tournament, and several Under-18 tournaments.

"Typhoon Soudelor affected all of us. Our calendar of events was changed because we had a lot of events and tournaments lined up that did not push hrough. There was also no [Marianas Interscholastic Sports Organization] season this year," said Rangamar.

"That's why we told [Northern Marianas Sports Association executive director] Tony Rogolifoi that we find someone who would fix the roof. It's a good thing that we found this Bangladeshi guy. We also did the mopping and clearing of the water inside the gym," he added.

"We just wanted to have the gym in a much better shape so we could hold games and practices. There were a lot who have been waiting for the gym to finally open, especially the kids. That's why we really did everything we could to open the gym."

Rangamar is also overseeing the national development program where he holds daily afternoon training sessions with a number of teenage kids, including former CNMI Junior League All-Star team member Jester Kintaro, who is 6'2".

"He's still raw but he's willing to learn. His tall so we wanted to further develop him," said Rangamar, who focuses on the basic drills especially with youth players. "We do a lot of running drills, pushing the ball in transition, and finishing off a fastbreak situation."

How to shoot jump hooks, layups, floaters, jump shots, stop and pop, use your left and right hand, dribble, footwork, and avoid the defense who wanted to take the charge are some of the regular drills that Rangamar have been teaching.

"But we focus more on doing fastbreak plays. Games are played 80 percent on fastbreak and broken plays, and only 20 percent on set plays," added Rangamar.

The Island-wide Men's and Women's leagues, Inter-Government/Business league, and the FIBA 3x3 tournament are the other events MIBF had lined up aside from the Micronesian Basketball Tournament this year.

FIBA Oceania development manager Annie Le Fleur, who played for the Australian Women's National Team that won silver in the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, held an administration course and conducted drills for the CNMI Women's Junior national team pool last month.

A former WNBA player with the Minnesota Lynx and Washington Mystics, Le Fleur held a Level 1 coaching course aside from assessing how the referees, statisticians, and table officials conducted their respective duties. TG

CNMI SHARKS BAND 'LOVE OF

THOMAS MANGLONA II
Contributing Writer

The CNMI has not had an official men's tackle football team since 2005. That is, until sports organizers and enthusiasts decided to form one in 2012.

The CNMI Sharks, comprised primarily of adult players, made their local debut with two games against Guam in May of 2013 and November in 2014.

One of the Sharks, John Blanco, told TAGA *Sports* that he and his teammates often practice at the Commonwealth Ports Authority Airport Field and on the Mount Carmel School campus.

Since the group's inception, the CNMI Sharks have played in five international games against the island of Guam and national teams in the Philippines combined.

In a game against the Philippine Punishers in 2012, the team held their own scoring six points in a 6-13 loss at the Philippines' Ultra Sports Complex.

The CNMI Sharks team poses for a photo. The team, which was formed in 2012, is the first in nine years for the islands.

TOGETHER FOR THE GAME'

Two years later, the Sharks returned to clobber the Philippine Punishers in a 72-0 thrashing of the hosts. Just recently, against the Manila Templars at the Gatorade Blue Pitch field, the Sharks prevailed with a 68-point victory and a record two wins against the team.

When asked what motivates the team to continue playing and training, Blanco said, "the love of the game."

The team plans to go up against the Guam All-Stars this month and a team from the Philippines in January next year. Practices for the game against Guam will begin this month.

According to Blanco, the team's next step is to "continue playing in international competitions and plan on rebuilding the CNMI men's tackle football league."

He said prospective football players can contact cnmifootball@gmail.com for a chance to become a CNMI Shark.

How I fell in love

DJAYMARCHONG
Contributing Writer

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Djaymarch Ong in action while suiting up for the Saipan Southern High School Manta Rays.

Basketball Diary is a first of a series of stories high school standout Djay Ong will be contributing to TAGA Sports.

My name is Djay Ong and I am 17 years old. I am an incoming senior at Saipan Southern High School. I've been playing basketball my entire life and my biggest inspiration to play basketball are my parents.

My mom has always been my biggest supporter. She's always been there for my games and whether I do good or bad I can always talk to her about it. She's always humble, kind, and caring. She is a big reason why I want to continue to improve playing this game. Part of it is that I want to continuously impress her and another big part is that she supports me doing it. I really appreciate all the hard work my mom gives just so that I can continue to pursue and play the game that I love.

With that said, growing up my mom and I would always watch my dad play. He used to play for the Fiesta Resort & Spa basketball team and every half time or timeout I would be one of those little kids shooting around for that small period of time. And so I was always around a basketball court from that time on. My dad would bring me to practice with him on all different courts such as the Navy Hill basketball court and the JP Center basketball court. It was hard for me to keep up with all the older guys playing around me for I didn't know how to dribble, shoot, and be physical but my dad kept bringing me anyways just to get me exposed.

As I kept receiving exposure to the game we practiced and trained. It was not fun at all. I was new to all this hard training under the sun and I hated it. We would get up early in the morning and head to an empty basketball court and just work on shooting and dribbling. And after all the drills my dad and I would play one-on-one full court. I would always lose but I felt like I was getting better every week. And so he was always my main coach as he disciplined me to sleep early, eat the right type of food, and train almost every day.

My dad is a big reason why I live a healthy lifestyle and I am very appreciative of all the hard work he has put into teaching me the sport he loves. Another big influence is my uncle, Chris Mojar. He always criticized me and challenged me to become better. As a young kid he would always beat me on the basketball court because he loves playing in the post. I would always cherish those moment when I played basketball with my uncle because he is really competitive, physically and mentally. And every time we talked the first thing he would always mention are a few tips regarding my game. Sometimes he would just randomly make a claim about how I can improve my ballhandling or my defensive stance. I take all his advice very seriously because he just wants me to be the best player that I can be.

From then on I got used to the lifestyle and that's when I truly fell in love with the sport. After school all I could think of was playing basketball. I would head to the Navy Hill basketball court after school and that's when I first got to play with random basketball players. I learned a lot from that court from all the games I've played there. It was tough keeping up with the older guys, as

they were competitive and rough. The game got a whole lot physical and it made me stronger. I would sometimes get into fights with some of the players but it was all just part of the game. Basketball toughens you as it is naturally competitive. Another reason why I got hooked to the game was some of the friends I've made playing it. All the friends I've made as a young kid came from playing basketball. The sport allowed me to interact with people when I played with them for it is a team sport. The game gave me confidence to interact and communicate with others despite me being a shy kid growing up. As I made more friends on the court, I got even more influenced by them. They challenged me to be better than them and I never wanted to come in second. I always wanted to win and be the best just like how I wanted to beat my dad so much one-on-one. And so the sport has made me closer to people more than ever and it was beneficial to my social life. From then on I realized that I would always be playing, including the holidays.

My friends and I would be shooting around on New Year's Eve on a court in the streets of Navy Hill. I couldn't imagine doing anything more fun than shooting a basketball and hearing the satisfying swoosh sound of the net. My parents never really exposed me to video games so all I had was a basketball. It was the only activity to do when I got bored. And so I got to experience playing with numerous teams in all different kinds of leagues. One of the very first teams I've played for was under Abner Venus for the Division of Youth Services. We won

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

A very young Djaymarch Ong, fourth right, poses with his father, Jonmarch Ong, after the elder Ong's team, made up of *Saipan Tribune* and Shirley's Coffee Shop employees, won an informal inter-company league.

with this game

the 15-and-under championship. It was a good learning experience getting exposed to playing in an official game. Part of the reason why I always wanted to get better was my dad. He would always criticize me after my games. There's never a time where I have not done something wrong and he would always mention it but it was all for my own good. Why play basketball if you aren't going to learn from it? And so from that time on my dad would tell me my mistakes after a game and we would work on it at the basketball court during our private training sessions. There would be some games where I played so good and even more games where I played horrible, but to my dad every game was a game to be studied for there was always something to improve on. I appreciate the amount of support he gives to me so that I could excel in this sport and that motivates me to continue to work hard and put in more effort.

And so I continued to play in more leagues and teams in order to gain more learning experience. I played in the Gualo Rai league under coach Edong. He allowed me to be myself on the court and just play the game that I play which is to score. In high school I was the only sophomore to make it into the Marianas High School varsity team. It was an honor to be able to play in the varsity team and a good learning experience. Although I was benched a lot due to the dominance of my teammates, I took it as a motivation to get better for I know I could play more as long as I worked harder than most. I also played in the San Antonio league under Ace Hardware. This team was special because we know each other's strengths and weaknesses and most importantly we have good communication on the court. We played together and we played to win. That team taught me how to be a good team player and that good individual performance is worthless without the win at the end. I also played for the inter hotel basketball league under the same Fiesta Resort team my dad used to suit up with. It was a good learning experience as I got to play with a lot of veterans.

The basketball organization that I am currently playing for is the 670 Sonics. This team is run by coach Jessie Tudela, coach Omar Ajoste, and coach Zachariah Johnson. These three coaches push me to work harder because they work extremely hard for this basketball club. All the training they give to me and my teammates are free along with the opportunity to play in the league. This gives me motivation to show them that I am not wasting their time. As they said their inspiration to do this for the young players is that they didn't have the opportunity to train with a basketball club when they were younger. They want this generation to be able to get that opportunity and that's what truly motivates them. It is the players that want to experience playing the right type of basketball at a young age that motivates them to coach so that there is a possibility for them to become successful in the near future.

Another coach that I've learned a few tips from is coach Elias Rangamar. He is the coach of the Ol'Aces basketball team. He teaches his players how to play tough, mentally and physically. I feel grateful for all the practice sessions he hosts at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

My goals in basketball are just to love and have fun with the game for as long as I can. I want to continue to be better and see where this sport can take me whether it be at the pros or being a coach and helping other young kids like myself be better in the near future. I also want to continue to be appreciative, especially from all the support I am getting from my parents because they've given me the opportunity to discover my true passion for this game.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Saipan lawyer Steven P. Pixley sprints toward the finish line of the 2016 Tagaman Triathlon. Alongside him is his teammate Akira Kadokura. Pixley did the run split, while Kadokura did the swim and bike splits.

Attorney considers running

STEVEN P. PIXLEY

FERDIEPONCE DE LA TORRE
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

"Age is just a number," says Saipan veteran lawyer Steven P. Pixley, who is over 50 years old and still running strong.

It might sound a bit strange, but Pixley considers running as one of his best friends over the years.

Pixley says running has gotten him through both good and bad times.

"A long run triggers endorphins in the brain greatly decreasing stress and enhancing clear thinking after a long day in court, for example," he explains.

The Tan Holdings Corp. legal counsel says running is a very important part of his life. He is still running 25-30 miles per week, mostly in the Marpi area.

Pixley started running in college and from there he never stopped.

Thanks to Bill Sakovich, Kurt Barnes, and others, Pixley had the honor of representing the CNMI in several international events, including the World Masters Games in Miyazaki, Japan, the Sendai Japan Half Marathon, and the Micronesian Games.

Pixley arrived on Saipan in April 1991, where he worked for the Office of the Attorney General as a criminal prosecutor. As soon as he stepped on the island, he literally hit the ground running as he trained for the 1991 Turkey Trot and other races.

On the day of the Turkey Trot race, Pixley recalls, he was at the at the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. beach in Lower Base, where Kurt Barnes was handling registration of runners.

A typhoon was bearing down on Saipan on that Thanksgiving morning and this prompted Barnes to postpone the race until Saturday morning.

Two days later, Pixley was leading the Turkey Trot until the course hit the coral road going up to Mount Tapochau, where NMASA Hall of Famer and longtime CNMI national tennis coach Jeff Race passed him.

"We battled for a while but he eventually passed me and I ended up in second place," recalls Pixley when he and Race both ran the course well under a blistering time of 40 minutes.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Saipan lawyer Steven P. Pixley represented the CNMI in the Half Marathon competition in Sendai, Japan in March 1995. He finished 1 hour and 23 minutes in the 13.1-mile run.

Before coming to Saipan in 1991, Pixley ran 32 marathons, including the Boston Marathon. In those days, for his age group, a participant needed to run under three hours to qualify for the race.

Pixley qualified with his 2:52:57 at the Isle of Palms in South Carolina. He was typically running 36 minutes in 10,000 meters and 17 minutes in 5,000 meter times in those days.

Growing up in Washington, D.C., Pixley ran the Marine Corps Marathon six times.

Pixley lived for three years in Pohnpei, where he served as chief of litigation for the Federated States of Micronesia National Government. He was responsible for handling litigation matters in Chuuk, Pohnpei, Kosrae, and Yap.

Pixley described his job in Pohnpei as "very interesting" and "quite an experience."

In Pohnpei, he mentored Elias Rodriguez, perhaps the best distance runner in the history of the FSM.

"We ran together almost every day in Pohnpei," recalls Pixley, who ran with Rodriguez in the Guam Seiko Marathon.

Pixley says the highlight of Rodriguez's running career was competing in the Olympics in Sydney, Australia, where he ran the marathon.

On secrets of longevity, Pixley believes that continuing to run is one key as it is difficult to start over after a long lay off. He listens to his body and would back off for a while if he is injured.

Pixley injured his hamstring during the Pacific Islands Club's paint run last April 9, but he is back now.

He notes that the very common injury from running is to the hamstrings and he recommends slow stretching. To avoid such injury, he walks the last half mile of his run to stretch out his legs.

Pixley says knee injuries and foot injuries are also common.

"It is also important to stay hydrated especially in our tropical environment. Drink lots of water," he says.

Pixley is encouraging his three children to be active. His two sons are good runners too.

"Staying fit is a great benefit," the running lawyer says.

as one of his best friends

Taming the Dragon

JIMRAYPHAND
Contributing Writer

A recent spate of local wild brush fires brings to the forefront our need for fire-ready personnel who have both the physical capacity and mental know-how to "tame the dragon" lest there be casualties (i.e. loss of life and property). For many of us it took 9/11—hard to believe, but from 15 years ago—to bring to the forefront of our national conscience iconic images of heroic firefighters walking into danger when others were running away... further giving credence to an old "adage about the bravery—or insanity—of firefighters that they run into burning buildings when everyone else is running out."

Of course, there is much more to fighting fires than just bravery; in fact, there is an actual science to it (albeit with no absolute solutions to the unlimited number of situations that can occur on any given fire not the least of which include human factor barriers to situation awareness)—human factors like: low experience, distraction, fatigue, stress reactions, and hazardous attitudes have a major impact on the outcome of any firefight. Coincidentally, two of the four known common denominators of fire behavior on tragedy fires (i.e. fatal and near-fatal fires) are that they occur (1) On relatively small fires or deceptively quiet areas of large fires; and (2) In relatively light fuels, such as grass, herbs, and light brush. Proof positive, maybe, that it really isn't the size of the fire in the dogfight, but the size of the fight in dog in the fire that matters. The point is that fire is not something to take lightly. Man discovered it about 4,000 years ago, but didn't learn to control it for another 2,500 years thereafter (timelines could be off slightly).

The simple fact is that there really is no substitute for well-trained firemen with the physical capabilities and mental fortitude to face the dragon and keep the fires at bay. Bear in mind too that, "Man is the only creature to dare light a fire and live with it. Because he alone has learned to put it out."

Each year the local Fire Department/Forestry Division teams up with the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) to vet and train both aspiring as well as veteran Fire Firefighters as part of a selection process for a semi-elite 15-20 man crew that could represent the CNMI on deployment for battle against wild-land forest fires in the Continental U.S.

A team of NWCG instructors come on island to administer a series of pre-requisite, physical qualifiers and coursework for firefighter certification—*"In an emergency situation, you don't rise to the occasion; you fall back to your level of training"—**Unknown***. Civilians and professional firefighters alike are given opportunities to try out. But at a minimum, only those who pass the dreaded "Pack Test" get invited to attend the certification courses.

As it turns out the Pack Test, a three- mile walk (no running allowed) with a loaded, 45-lb pack to be completed in 45 minutes or less, is not as easy as it sounds. Of course there are plenty of bucks (young and old) who breeze through it like nothing, but the numbers don't lie and this year's Pack Test weeded out a majority of those who thought they could—understanding too that even one second over 45 minutes does not qualify. Ultimately, it's a combination of solid cardio, decent muscle structure, and a never-quit attitude that pushes you over the finish line under time. The same combination, I might add, for slaying fire dragons in the wild-land mountain ranges of our great nation… hence the minimum standard for induction onto the team.

The powers that be (i.e. the fire bosses and such) develop a fire-ready list of eligible candidates and work their way down until the crew is formed and the CNMI offers up a team of islanders to join the fight.

"When the call comes in, you're either in or you're out," barks firefighter Mizutani. "I don't wanna hear about whether or not you have enough leave or that you need to ask your wife. You need to know now that if you go it's for a month minimum, maybe more."

"Over the past decade, an average of 18 people have been killed each year while trying to suppress U.S. wildfires" (ecowest.org—***Mitch Tobin***)…the dragon is real. So maybe the call comes in to the CNMI this year or maybe it doesn't. The point is that we are prepared, if it does. And perhaps, we can all take some comfort in knowing that. "Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go"—***Unknown***.

STANDARD FIREFIGHTING ORDERS:

(NWCG Incident Response Pocket Guide)

1. Keep informed on fire and weather conditions and forecasts.
2. Know what your fire is doing at all times.
3. Base all actions on current and expected behavior of the fire.
4. Identify escape routes and safety zones, and make them known.
5. Post lookouts when there is possible danger.
6. Be alert. Keep calm. Think clearly. Act decisively.
7. Maintain prompt communications with your forces, your supervisor, and adjoining forces.
8. Give clear instructions and be sure they are understood.
9. Maintain control of your forces at all times.
10. Fight fire aggressively, having provided for safety first.

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